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AUTHOR Cook, Stuart W.
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ABSTRACT

Recipients of help often show less liking for their helpers than for others who do not provide help, presumably because the recipient is left with feelings of lowered self-esteem and unfulfilled indebtedness to the donor. Three-person interracial teams were presented with a series of problems in the course of managing a simulated business. One was the research subject; a young, white male from a region in which racial prejudice is frequently encountered. The two other team members were experimental confederates, one white and one Black. The research subject was exposed to one of three receipt-of-help conditions: (1) receiving help from a teammate who provided it voluntarily; (2) receiving help from a teammate instructed to provide help; or (3) receiving no help. Race of the helping teammate and success or failure of the team were also considered. Respect and liking for teammates who helped voluntarily was significantly greater than that for teammates in the no-help condition. Respect and liking for an instructed helper was at an intermediate level. Reactions to the three helping conditions did not differ significantly with respect to race of helping teammate or success or failure of the team. (Author.LHW)

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Reactions to Helping and Being Helped in Interracial Cooperative Groups: Effects on Respect and Liking for Group Members

Stuart W. Cook
Department of Psychology and
Institute of Behavioral Science
University of Colorado, Boulder

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ABSTRACT

Previous research on helping behavior has found that recipients of help often show less liking for their helpers than for others who do not provide help. Presumably this happens because the recipient is left with feelings of lowered self-esteem and unfulfilled indebtedness to the donor.

Three-person interracial teams were presented with a series of problems in the course of managing a simulated business. One was the research subject; a young, white male from a region in which racial prejudice is frequently encountered. The two other team members were experimental confederates, one white and one black.

The research subject was exposed to one of three receipt-of-help conditions. He either a) received help from a teammate who provided it voluntarily, b) received help from a teammate instructed to provide help, or c) was not helped. Two additional factors were also varied in a 3 x 2 x 2 design: race of the helping teammate; and success or failure of the team.

Respect and liking for teammates who helped voluntarily was found to be significantly greater than that for teammates in the no-help condition. Respect and liking for an instructed helper was at an intermediate level. Reactions to the three helping conditions from black teammates paralleled quite closely those of equivalent types of help from white teammates. These findings held equally under conditions of team success or team failure.

These results are interpreted to indicate that an interdependent group context reverses the meaning of and, hence, the effect of unreciprocated help. In this context, a recipient is hypothesized to perceive the helping act as a role obligation of the donor, and of mutual benefit to donor and recipient. The postulated effect of this altered perspective is to remove the basis for the sense of indebtedness and feeling of obligation to return the help. In the absence of such feelings, there should be no motivation to decrease one's evaluation of the helper.

REACTIONS TO HELPING AND BEING HELPED IN INTERRACIAL COOPERATIVE GROUPS: EFFECTS ON RESPECT AND LIKING FOR GROUP MEMBERS

I am going to talk about several studies of cross-racial interpersonal attraction that were carried out in the context of cooperating interracial groups. In order to avoid any possible confusion about the nature of the studies, I want to call your attention to two points. The first is that the criterion variable is mutual respect and liking among those in the contact situation. Thus, these are not studies of generalized attitude change. The second is that the studies do not vary the conditions of contact that we refer to as the contact hypothesis. Rather, the general question they address is whether there are additional factors over and above those specified in the contact hypothesis that may increase or decrease the likelihood of favorable interpersonal outcomes of interracial contact.

In recent years I have studied a number of such factors. To take an example, if we find that equal status contact in cooperating interracial groups produces cross-racial friendships, do we know whether this outcome is more likely when the group is successful in its task than when it fails? In addition to the success/failure question, other factors I have studied include participation in decision making regarding the group's working procedures, the relative competence of group members for their responsibilities in the group task, and the race of group members. The experiments I shall discuss today are a part of this series of studies.

The focus of the studies grew out of an inherent feature of interdependent groups. This is that if a group member handicaps the group's progress because of inability to perform his or her allocated share of the group task, the logic of a joint goal induces another group member to provide assistance. This would be considered a positive feature of group activity

were it not for the fact that such helping might diminish both the helper's liking for the person helped and the recipient's liking for the helper.

There are at least two reasons for anticipating a decrement in the helper's respect and liking for the help recipient. The first is that giving help may call the helper's attention to the recipient's inadequacy, and make such inadequacy a more salient aspect of an evaluation of the recipient. The second reason, which might build upon the first, is that there is a substantial body of evidence showing that we like better and respect more, those persons we believe to be more competent and successful.

With regard to the opposite side of the coin, the help recipient's respect and liking for the helper, the evidence arousing concern comes from the research on reactions to unreciprocated help. The relevant finding in this work has been that the help recipient experiences a decrement of respect and liking for the helper under three conditions: one, when the assistance is related to a task that engages the recipient's self-respect; two, when it is given by a similar peer who has no basis in education or expertise for outperforming the recipient; and three, when the help cannot be reciprocated. Such conditions often characterize task-oriented interdependent groups composed of strangers or casual acquaintances in educational and work settings. These are the types of groups I have been studying.

These warning signs about helping behavior in interdependent groups ordinarily might be of little practical concern. After all, the logic of helping in such groups is premised on its value in promoting group success. And, of all the factors that further enhance mutual respect and liking found in cooperating groups that face a challenging task, group success seems to have the greatest effect. However, in industrial, educational and community settings, the fact that working groups and learning groups are increasingly

interracial highlights a special consideration. This is that, particularly in newly desegregated settings, ethnic minorities are more likely to have come from backgrounds in which less adequate education and training was available. To the extent that this has been the case, they are more likely to be recipients of help than help-givers. Thus, if it happens that respect and liking between helper and recipient are negatively affected by helping, we may see a decrement in the level of positive interpersonal relationships that cooperative interracial contact would otherwise encourage.

So far, I have talked only about the negative warning signs regarding the effect of helping on respect and liking. However, there are also grounds for anticipating positive outcomes. One source is the work on reconciling beliefs with behavior. For example, a 1969 study by Jecker and Landy reported that a person who had been persuaded to do a costly and unreciprocated favor for someone else showed an increase in liking for that individual. The investigators suggested a dissonance reduction interpretation of this outcome. Another source is research that relates reward in situations to liking for others who are present in the situation. A number of investigators have reported a correspondence between degree of satisfaction with an experience and attraction to those who share it. The argument would be that performing well enough to be a help-giver should be ego-enhancing. The resulting satisfaction and positive affect might possibly generalize to greater regard for the aid recipient.

With respect to the recipient's feelings for the donor of unreciprocated help, the grounds for expecting negative outcomes among strangers or casual acquaintances seem quite persuasive. However, if we look at unreciprocated help in close and continuing relationships, a different picture emerges. Several writers have called on everyday observation and questionnaire data to

make the point that in relations among family, friends and allies, derogation of donors of unreciprocated help does not develop. The reason for this, presumably, is the assumption made by the recipient that reciprocation will occur later. In 1979, Clark and Mills reported experimental results consistent with this theme. Later in my discussion, I will suggest an interpretation of reactions to unreciprocated help that may hold not only for close and continuing relationships but also for relationships among strangers or casual acquaintances in cooperating interracial groups.

I will have time to give a detailed description of only one of the experiments on teammate helping. I have chosen an experiment on the recipient's liking for the helper for two reasons. The first is that under the conditions of unreciprocated help from a similar peer on an ego-involving task, a confident prediction could be made from past research and theory that the recipient's liking for the donor should decrease. The second is that by taking into account the context of helping provided by a cooperative task, the opposite prediction may be made. Briefly, the difference between the two predictions hinges on the assumed meaning of being helped in the two contexts. In the independent dyadic relationship, theorists have proposed that the experience of receiving unreciprocated help induces feelings of donor-recipient inequity, indebtedness to the donor, reactance, and lowered self-esteem. Being unable to reduce these feelings by reciprocating help, the recipient adjusts subjectively by lowering his or her evaluation of the helper. In contrast, in a group with a joint goal, the assumption is that the recipient perceives the helping act as a role obligation of the donor and of benefit to the donor as well as the recipient. The postulated effect of this altered perspective is to remove the basis for the sense of indebtedness and

feeling of obligation to return the help. In the absence of such feelings there should be no motivation to decrease liking for the help-giver.

The independent variable of primary interest in the experiment was the help, or lack of it, received by the subject. When help was given it took two forms: voluntarily by a teammate or by a teammate instructed to help by the experimenter. The result was a three-level help variable: receipt of voluntary helping, receipt of instructed helping, or receipt of no help. There were two other independent variables: the success or failure of the team in its task, and the race of the helping teammate. Since the main effects of these variables were known from previous studies, our principal interest was in their interactions with the help variable. The three variables were presented in a 3x2x2 factorial design, with 7 subjects in each of the 12 cells.

A simulated business, similar to management exercises found in business schools, was employed as a context for the study. The 3-person management group included the research subject, a black confederate and a white confederate. The research subjects were male high school graduates. All were Air Force enlistees in a technical training center housing 10,000 students. Subjects were selected from a pool of volunteers, using the sole criterion that their homes were in small towns or rural areas in the southeastern part of the United States. This geographic selection criterion was intended to increase the likelihood that the subjects would be racially prejudiced. Both confederates were dressed in Air Force fatigues and had been trained in the lore needed to represent themselves as Air Force trainees like the subject.

The simulated business was a railroad serving ten cities. The company received orders to ship a variety of freight, ranging from perishables to heavy equipment, and used six types of cars for this purpose. Since certain

types of freight could be shipped only in specified types of cars, having the appropriate cars in the cities where the different types of products originated determined efficient operation of the business. The team worked for five business periods of 15 minutes each. These were separated by discussion periods during which team members tried to find ways of increasing profits and cutting losses. These discussions were guided by the confederates who led the subject toward discovery of improved procedures. Control of the business orders and of the equipment available to the team, plus programmed changes in operational procedures guided by the confederates, made it possible to provide equivalent task experiences to all subjects.

The experimental variables were introduced in this context. In order to vary the type of help received it was necessary first to put the subject in the position of needing help. This was accomplished by overloading him in such a way that he delayed the team's work. The subject responded to this delay with embarassment and apologies to his teammates. The confederate who was scheduled to respond to the subject's need for help did so in one of three ways; either by voluntarily offering to assist the subject, or by giving assistance only after the experimenter suggested that he do so, or by neither giving assistance nor appearing to notice the subject's difficulties.

The second independent variable, success or failure in the group task, was manipulated by reports of the experimenter. Progress reports were given after each business period and were the occasion for team members to exhort each other to do better. Overall success was defined as the team amassing profits that surpassed the average profits earned by comparison groups of Air Force officers, a high status group for the subjects. Failure was defined as failing to exceed the average profits of comparison groups of Army privates, a low status group for the subjects.

Group members were informed that they would receive a $5 bonus if they surpassed the profits of the comparison group. Those in the success condition received the bonus while those in the failure condition did not. The latter received the bonus following the debriefing.

Race was manipulated by assignment of either the white confederate or the black confederate to the helper role.

Following the last business period and the report on team success or failure, the three team members bid one another goodby and were put in separate rooms to answer questions for the guidance of the experimenter in future use of the simulated business task. These included an interpersonal attraction scale measuring respect and liking for each teammate as well as numerous measures of the subject's feelings about the team, his own performance and that of his teammates.

Now, as to the results. With respect and liking for the helper as the dependent variable, we found a significant main effect of the type of help the subject received. However, contrary to what would have been expected from parallel studies of persons helped outside of interdependent groups, we found that respect and liking for teammates who helped voluntarily was significantly higher than that for teammates in the no-help condition. Respect and liking for an instructed helper was intermediate, that is, attraction to a groupmate who helped after being told to do so was approximately midway between that for voluntary helpers and for non-helpers.

Of special interest to race relations and the contact hypothesis is the fact that there was no main effect of race of helper on attraction to helper, nor was there a race by type-of-help interaction. In other words, reactions to different types of help from black teammates paralleled quite closely those of equivalent types of help from white teammates. The finding for group

success versus failure was similar; there was no interaction between this variable and types of help.

The results of the study seem consistent with the prediction that an interdependent group context would reverse the meaning of and hence the effect of unreciprocated help on recipients' attraction to helpers, both white and black. Recall that the grounds for entertaining such a possibility emphasized the change in the recipient's perspective both toward the helper and toward the meaning of aid that occurs in an interdependent group with a joint goal. In this context a recipient is hypothesized to perceive the helping act as a role obligation of the donor and of mutual benefit to donor and recipient. The postulated effect of this altered perspective is to remove the basis for the sense of indebtedness and feeling of obligation to return the help. In the absence of such feelings there should be no motivation to decrease one's evaluation of the donor.

However, this line of reasoning is only partially adequate to explain the results. While it suggests a way of understanding why the customary negative feelings about being helped do not develop, it is insufficient to account for the development of an <u>increase</u> in liking for the helper. For this to occur it must be assumed that additional factors come into play. Here we are on familiar ground. Other studies have pointed to a sequence of attributions and inferences often made by aid recipients. The sequence begins with the attribution that a helper who is under no discernable external or self-enhancing impulsion to give help must be doing so for dispositional reasons. This attribution leads the recipient to a second inference, namely that the donor is a helpful, altruistic type of person, or, alternatively, is helping the recipient out of concern for the recipient's needs. In response, the recipient's liking for the helper increases, perhaps in accord with the

interpersonal attraction principle of reciprocal liking for those who like you or, alternatively, due to our customary admiration for those with valued traits such as generosity. Other investigators have suggested that this same sequence of attributions might well account for the more positive reactions to voluntary than to instructed help-givers found in this study and in a number of others.

Earlier, I mentioned a possible similarity in interpretations of recipient reactions in close and continuing relationships, on the one hand, and in interdependent groups of strangers or casual acquaintances, on the other. The interpretative emphasis in the former has been partly on recognition by the recipient of the possibility for future reciprocation in a continuing relationship and partly on obligation to help as part of a close relationship. Since in the study I have described there was no possibility of future reciprocation, we should consider the possibility that in close and continuing relationships, as well as in interdependent groups of strangers or casual acquaintances, the factor of perceived role obligation alone is sufficient to block possible negative reactions to a help-giver.

I should note that there are at least two plausible alternative interpretations to the one I have offered for recipients' attraction to helpers in cooperating groups. One of these is that the differences in attraction across the three helping conditions are mediated by differences in the recipients' perceptions of the helpers' and potential helpers' competence. Comparisons of the subjects' assessments of teammates in helping and non-helping conditions showed perceived competence to be significantly higher for the former.

The other alternative interpretation makes the assumption that the subject was attracted to his helping groupmate because the latter relieved him

of severe discomfort. As the time passed in the business operation the subject moved from responsibility for delaying his team to a state of satisfactorily completing a reduced load of work. This was accompanied by a readily apparent emotional relief. As indicated earlier, the association of persons with a pleasant outcome--in this case escape from discomfort and embarassment--may lead to liking for those responsible for, or even contiguous to, the outcome.

I have time to make only a brief concluding comment on three studies I have done on the helper's reaction to the recipient of help. In these studies, the research subject was the helper and the relationship under examination was that between the conditions of helping and attraction to the teammate helped. This relationship can be looked at from several perspectives. One of these is the contrast between simply having a teammate who has difficulty with his or her part of the group task but is not helped, on the one hand, and having such a teammate who does receive help, on the other. Even though the less competent teammate makes identical mistakes in the two cases, respect and liking is lower when the teammate receives help. We find that observing the teammate receive help leads to lower perceived competence and this difference probably mediates the difference in interpersonal attraction. A second perspective is the contrast between the subject's personally giving help and watching a third teammate do so. This makes no difference to the subject's level of attraction to the helped teammate. A third perspective is the contrast between being a voluntary helper and one who helps because directed to do so. Again, the difference makes no difference in respect and liking for the person helped. In other

words, the sole effect on respect and liking is due to the greater awareness of the teammate's ineffectiveness that comes about either from helping him or seeing him helped. As in the study of recipients' liking for helpers, there were no interactions of type of help with race of person helped. Liking for a black teammate under different conditions of helping closely paralleled liking for a white teammate under the same conditions.

To conclude, let me say a word about possible inferences from these results to the effects of helping in cooperating interracial groups in natural settings. In addition to the ever-present reservations about lab to field generalization, there is an additional point to consider. This is that helping in task-oriented groups is done in the interest of promoting group success and, as I noted earlier, group success exerts a strong influence on the level of attraction to less competent groupmates, including those from opposite as well as own race. That this effect is greater than the negative effect of helping on respect and liking for the help recipient is shown in one of the three studies I just summarized. In that study, the effect size of the group success versus group failure variable was .8 of the standard deviation of the sample. By comparison, the effect size of the help versus no-help variable in the same study was half this magnitude, .4 of a standard deviation. Thus, to the extent that helping does promote group success, the fact that its potential for favorable effects outweighs our current estimate of the size of its negative effect should be remembered. When this potential is combined with the positive effect of being helped on the recipient's attraction to the helper, the net outcome argues for continuing to foster helping in task-oriented interracial groups.